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THE  
TWO MORALITIES



THE  
TWO MORALITIES  
OUR DUTY TO GOD  
AND TO SOCIETY

*by*

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*With an introduction by*  
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THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

1940  
EYRE & SPOTTISWOODE  
LONDON

*First Published* . . . . . *January 1940*  
*Reprinted* . . . . . *February 1940*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN FOR  
SYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE (PUBLISHERS) LONDON

## INTRODUCTION

IT is always difficult to maintain an equal development of the various capacities of our nature, and at all times there is a danger that religious devotion and intellectual enterprise should fall apart. This is specially true to-day when the problems of life are more than usually complex. If we are Christians we are convinced that the Christian faith supplies the illumination by which alone we may see life and the world in true perspective. Then, in our insistence upon this, we are liable to suppose that acceptance of that faith in a living and practical way is the only necessity. This irritates those who know perfectly well that no amount of piety can unravel the tangle of the world's condition, and makes them liable to belittle what it can contribute.

It is a main purpose of this series to help thoughtful Christians to be at one and the same time stronger in faith and more thorough in thought. No one could more fitly inaugurate such an enterprise than the Master of Balliol, and in this book he tackles the job at what may be called its most sensitive point. We are hearing much of loyalty to Christ and loyalty to State as though these were on the same level and

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could come into collision. Every Christian knows that loyalty to Christ takes priority over every other. The problem is to express our loyalty to Christ in and through loyalty to our secular fellowships and rulers, the State among them.

The Master's clear analysis and sure touch will both stimulate and assist all his readers to solve for themselves this urgent problem.

WILLIAM EBOR

*January 1940*

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THE  
TWO MORALITIES



## CHAPTER I

### *Introduction*

**T**HIS is meant to be a challenging title. It is certainly a title that will be challenged. For some who read it will say: "How can there be two moralities? There is what is right over against what is wrong. To speak of two moralities is to open the door to immoral sophistries." Others, on the contrary, will say: "Why stop at two? Morality is always relative. There are not two but hundreds of moralities."

I chose my title to express my conviction that most real moral problems are concerned with the tension between two moralities. I shall call one the morality of "my station and its duties." Of the proper name for the other I am not sure. I shall call it alternatively the morality of the challenge to perfection, or the morality of grace. We all of us (if we are to live in society) must recognise the authority of the morality of "my station and its duties." But if we live in a country which is influenced at all by Christianity or indeed by any of the higher religions, we are most of us aware of another morality and its challenge, and are at least occasionally stirred by that challenge. When we are so stirred, we often find the morality

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of my station and its duties enjoining one thing and the morality of perfection enjoining another, and we are troubled as to which we should obey. This is a problem for the ordinary plain man. To some of us the most familiar form of that problem is the apparent conflict between the demands of ordinary morality, i.e. the morality of my station and its duties, and the challenge of the Sermon on the Mount. Upholders and opponents of pacifism are largely concerned with that conflict.

Of course ordinary everyday morality has what we may call its own problems, as there are problems in chess or indeed in any simpler game. We cannot play a game without knowing its rules. But to know the rules does not tell us how to play this or that move or this or that stroke. Similarly, we may understand and accept the moral code of our station and appreciate its duties, and yet such understanding does not in itself tell us what to do in any given situation. It may, for example, be part of our code to set aside a tenth of our income for charitable purposes. That does not tell us how to distribute it among all the various claimants for our charity. The solution of such practical problems is a matter for the exercise of judgement. There is no infallible rule for their decision. When we look back on our conduct, we can often see in the light of what has happened that we made

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a mistake. We say: "Yes, that was stupid of me. I did A and I should have done B"; much as we say: "I see now. I shouldn't have moved that pawn." We sometimes see that the situation before us was more complicated than we realised, and we say, "I ought to have thought about it more." But all that, we realise, is the way the world is made up. It is our business to play the game as well as we can. We shall not play it perfectly whatever we do. We have to act, and events do not give us much time for reflection. It is quite easy to be over-scrupulous and waste time in discussing the pros and cons of this or that question when we should be much better occupied in "getting on with the job." I once heard a group of moral philosophers discuss for about an hour this question: "Supposing I had one ticket for a concert and supposing I knew that X would appreciate the concert just as much as I should, and no more, ought I to give him my ticket or go myself?" The philosophers may have had theoretical reasons for their discussion, but no sensible man discusses questions like that. Life is too short and there are too many things to do. We have to go ahead and act, and not worry too much over our mistakes if we can learn by them to be wiser next time; and about such problems as are involved in much of our ordinary conduct we do not, most of us,

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worry. We should not be better off but worse if we did.

If we do want advice on such questions, we go—if we are sensible—to a good man whose judgement we trust, and not to the moral philosophers. It is not the business of moral philosophy to do the work of the moral judgement. The moral philosopher has, indeed, problems of his own, but these are theoretical problems and some of them are quite justifiably remote from practical conduct. The problems of the moral philosopher are often not problems for the ordinary practical man. The moral philosopher, for example, must ask how moral responsibility and scientific law are compatible, and then he deals with “the problem” of free will. But the ordinary sensible man does not trouble himself as to whether or how he has free will, but goes on acting in the conviction that he has choices before him and must decide between them.

Of course if the plain man is very silly and bemuses himself with reading bad philosophy, served up under the title “What modern science or what modern psychology tells us,” he may allow such bad philosophy to paralyse his conduct. He may sit and do nothing, accusing his complexes or his glands or economic laws when he ought to be acting. Such mental disease, when brought about by bad

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philosophy, can sometimes be cured by good philosophy, and thus the most metaphysical speculations may be relevant to practical conduct. But in so far as moral philosophy takes moral conduct for granted, as something which philosophical reflection is to understand but not to alter or to change—and in some of its discussions moral philosophy is bound to do that—the discussions of moral philosophy are apt to seem somewhat remote from practical life.

But the problems which are raised by the conflict between the morality of my station and its duties and the morality of the challenge to perfection are quite different. The ordinary practical man finds himself involved, whether he likes it or not, in a conflict of principles—not just with the question of how accepted principles are to be applied in individual instances. He is told one thing on Sunday and another on weekdays or, more confusing still, his spiritual guides differ among themselves. He finds himself living in a society governed by laws and codes and customs; which are not ideal; which have made terms with the imperfections and evils of men; which accept the use of force, of armies and police and prisons; which recognise and appear to condone all kinds of inequalities and injustices. He belongs to society and could not live without it; he accepts its benefits. Protest against its injustices as he may, he profits by

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the genuine social achievement of society in which these evils exist. Yet at the same time the Sermon on the Mount seems to take no account of such a relative morality as is embodied in our actual rules of conduct, and calls us to a mode of life inspired through and through with love to all men.

Can we respond to that demand and yet compromise with society as it exists? That is the general question contained in such more particular questions as: Can a Christian obey the State's call to military service? Can a Christian engage in modern business? and so on.

Some people find definite and clear solutions. There are certain demands or rules of society which they repudiate. Or they may adopt a position very like that ascribed by some German writers to the early Christians. They accept the ordinary standards of society as an *interimsethik*—a meanwhile morality; and answer the challenge of the morality of perfection by throwing all their energies into the bringing into being of “a Christian society.” But when they are asked to explain what a Christian society is, they are found to differ among themselves; and we shall see that if we take seriously the challenge to perfection there is a sense in which there cannot be a Christian society. There cannot be a society in which we can say, “The enlightening work of

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the spirit is done. Our rules and system are now perfection."

But whether the solutions with which some people content themselves are satisfactory or not, many people at the present time feel the contrast between the morality of my station and its duties and the morality of the challenge to perfection and are puzzled by it. How often nowadays do we not hear the reproach that the only morality taught in public schools is the morality of "playing the game." That is another name for the morality of my station and its duties. But we are not told what morality ought to be taught instead. There is no generally accepted doctrine on the subject, and many people feel that all they can do is to compromise in various ways which are not satisfactory to them, and they feel that they cannot rest without seeking some explanation of their difficulties.

Of course the problem is not a new one. It is at least as old as Christianity and indeed older. From time to time this or that solution of the problem has been found which has won general acceptance, and men have lived and acted inside the framework of the solution. One obvious solution, for example, was that only a few people were called to live this special life of perfection, and to do that they had to leave the world, to go into a monastery or to join a religious

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order. We shall consider some of these solutions later. But from time to time an accepted solution ceases to find favour and then these conflicting principles have been the subject of animated discussion by ordinary earnest people. The seventeenth century in England was a time of that kind, and the principles of moral conduct, the relations of the demands of the Gospel and the demands of law were debated in all manner of books and pamphlets.

We ourselves are living in such a time. A morality of my station and its duties which has been somewhat sublimated by Christianity but not too much sublimated to be impractical, no longer satisfies as it did, and is widely repudiated. Largely in consequence of such repudiation we see two opposite things happening at the same time—the repudiation of accepted morality leads to the repudiation of all moral standards and at the same time brings it about that the challenge to perfection is heard more clearly and more insistently. Questions raised by the relation between the two moralities are to-day once again continually and eagerly debated. All sorts of books and pamphlets are written about moral principles. Yet academic moral philosophy as taught in universities stands mainly remote and aloof as though it had never heard of these actually occurring moral tumults. This is a remoteness which is in my

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judgement inexcusable. Philosophical reflection cannot give immediate practical guidance, but it ought at least to be able to disentangle an apparent conflict of principles. This book is an attempt at disentanglement.

We shall have to begin, of course, by trying to make clear what the conflict is, and the best way to do that will be to describe the morality of my station and its duties as we are all severally confronted with it, and then consider the contrast between that and the challenge to perfection.

## CHAPTER II

### *My Station and its Duties, or “Playing the Game”*

FOR all the discussion that goes on nowadays about moral questions and the breakdown of moral standards, I still think it is true that most of us do not spend much time in worrying over what as individuals we ought to do. After all we have our job and that takes most of our time. We have a recognised place and function in society. Our job or place in society carries with it duties which are expected of us, which we normally accept. As an employer might say to any man whom he takes on and to whom he has offered a special job: “Now do you understand your duties?”, so we all of us roughly understand our position and the behaviour which it involves. When, for example, we are considering whether we shall go in for a new job, we say to ourselves, “It will mean that we shall have to be prepared to do this or that,” as we might say in criticism of a man whom we thought was lazy: “He ought not to have taken on the job, if he wasn’t prepared to shoulder its responsibilities.” We think of those duties as belonging to or arising out of the job or out of the station in society. They are there, we think, to be carried out

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by any one who occupies that station or takes on that job: duties of a husband or a wife or a citizen or a town councillor; or duties of a teacher or doctor or employer of labour or of a craftsman.

We sometimes, as I have implied, call those duties responsibilities. One form in which I am sometimes asked to write testimonials to character is: "Can you recommend him for a responsible position?" That sounds as if we shared out the necessary tasks in the combined work of society and each of us said, "I'll see to this. I'll answer for this if someone else will answer for that." We do not, of course, do anything so conscious and thought out as that in the general organisation of society, but we do all feel responsible to other people in carrying out the duties of our station as we regard them as responsible to us. We can devote ourselves to carrying out the duties of our job partly because we know that other people are similarly carrying out their jobs. This morality is social and implies mutual interdependence and mutual responsibility.

This conduct which we recognise to be obligatory upon us is expected of us. That is indeed how we ordinarily learn it. From our earliest years it is made clear that there are certain ways in which we, as members of our circle, are expected to behave. As we shall see, a good deal of the morality of my station

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and its duties is reasonable and we might be induced to conform to much of it because it is reasonable. But we learn what is expected of us and the notion of being good or bad, dutiful or undutiful, in a much simpler and more elementary way—from the approval and disapproval of our elders and our companions from our earliest years. There is a pleasant story of a very modern and advanced young mother saying to her child, “You must not say a thing is wrong. That’s naughty.” So hard is it for any one to give up the habit of social approval and disapproval. Nor is there any reason why one should. On the contrary. It is of the greatest importance to us all that social rules should be observed, and we normally have to be taught by such social approval or disapproval the soundness and advantages of social rules which we may afterwards come to appreciate for ourselves. “Every man did what was right in his own eyes,” is a description not of an ideal but of an anarchical society.

That we are responsible persons means then that we acknowledge our responsibilities; that means that we acknowledge our obligations, that we are bound, not free to do precisely as we please, because others depend upon our behaviour.

But, paradoxically enough, responsibility also means being free. If you complain: “He refused to treat me

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as a responsible person," or "He would not give me a responsible job," you mean that you were not left to make decisions according to your own judgement. A responsible position is one where you are, within limits, your own master. A responsible person, then, is both bound and free.

This is not really so paradoxical as it sounds, but it is important to understand the connection between freedom and assurance. No one can act freely or constructively if he has not the least notion of how other people, whose actions are linked with his, are going to behave. This is true of our relation to things. None of us could do anything worth doing if things behaved just anyhow. We all know that our knowledge of scientific law has increased our power over nature. Our knowledge of how other things are determined increases our possibilities of freedom. If we could depend upon other people just exactly as we can depend on things the laws of whose operations we clearly understand, we should have the greater power, though not, perhaps, the greater freedom. But then our power would be gained at the expense of others and we alone would be free. But it is clear, if we think of it, that in order to act freely we do not need to know *exactly* how our environment, including other people, is going to respond. Consider what happens when we are playing a game. We are right,

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I am sure, in thinking of a game as a sphere in which to a peculiar degree we exercise spontaneity and freedom. Yet it is clear that we cannot play a game without rules. If a number of people were told to play a game and also told that the game had no rules, they would not know what to do, because no one of them would have any notion what the others were going to do. The only game of that kind I have heard of is the Caucus Race in *Alice in Wonderland*, and you will remember that because there were no rules they had in practice to do what the mouse told them. Anarchy always leads to despotism, because anarchy is always found to be quite impossible, and we fly from the impossible to the most immediate possibility.

There is freedom in a game because the actions of those we are playing with are variations within the rules of the game and the variations can be matched by our powers of varied response. You can see how this is so if you ask why a tennis single between two equal but moderately good players is a better game than a single between a very good player and a moderately good player. The moderately good player has not got power of varying his response adequate to the other's much greater power of varying his strokes, and he is therefore deprived of all initiative. Even the superior player—though he can, as one says,

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“do what he likes with his opponent”—has not the sense of freedom and initiative he would have in a game with an equal. He has more power of variation within the rules than is called forth by the challenge of his opponent’s variations.

This trivial illustration is worth considering because it shows how the freest exercise of activity implies rules and also implies a fair equality between the persons concerned. If law and morals are to help freedom, not only must they imply rules binding on all; though they cannot imply equal endowment, they must imply equal rights. The rules are used to maintain rights; and rights are protected liberties—powers of varying one’s actions in response to circumstances and other people’s behaviour within the rules.

If we are to be responsible persons and treat others as responsible persons, we have to be both bound and free. We must accept the obligations of common rules, and the rules must give and maintain equal rights. Then we can plan our actions and co-operation with other people, with the assurance that there are certain rules they will not break: that there are certain ways in which we can behave without arbitrary interference with other people. We need not know just what people will do in order to co-operate with them; we only need to know that the possible variations

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within their conduct will not go outside the limits of the rules.

We can, indeed, in practice go a little further than that. I have been assuming so far that the variations in people's conduct to which we respond with variations in our own are within the rules and the spirit of the rules. But if we go back to our example of a game, we can notice that playing a game within the rules is not just a matter of skill. A game may be played in a generous and sporting spirit, when the spirit as well as the letter of the rules is observed: or it may be played meanly and unsportingly, and if we find ourselves playing against such unsporting opponents, the game becomes less pleasant but not impossible. If players will not regard the rules at all, the game becomes impossible, but a certain amount of unsporting behaviour can be dealt with. So in society. Laws and moral codes are never perfectly observed: we can deal either individually or by various forms of social action with one another's delinquencies and meanness up to a point. Social life is impossible without a fair assurance that most people will usually keep the rules. It *is* incompatible with anarchy, but it is a long step from perfect observance of social rules to anarchy.

At any given time there are usually three sorts of people in society: those whose actions are better than

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the rules, whose faith and generosity and idealism is adding to the moral capital of society; secondly, those who "pay their way," who exact their rights and fulfil their duties; and, thirdly, those who take as much and give as little as they can, who keep the rules—in so far as they do—only because society compels them to do so.

Any normal society at any time is living on the capital of mutual faith and responsibility built up by the faithfulness of countless ordinary men and women in the past. Any society at any time is either increasing that capital or dissipating it, according to the prevalence in it of the first or the third of these classes. It is probable that in most societies the mass of people belong mainly to the middle class: are prepared to be decent to people who are decent to them: keep the rules well and cheerfully so long as others do the same. "If ye love them which love you, what grace is there in that? Do not even the Gentiles the same?"

Because this is so, even the morality of my station and its duties depends upon faith or mutual trust. There has got to be a general expectation that rules will be observed: that if we play our part, others will play theirs. Such confidence that men will recognise their mutual responsibility and act up to it is not, unfortunately, produced automatically by the need for it. When men become mutually interdependent,

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co-operation between them only becomes possible if they are mutually responsible. But such mutual responsibility is no automatic consequence of interdependence. Interdependence may only produce anarchy. That is only too painfully evident in the world to-day. Economic and technical changes have created the interdependence of men all over the world much faster than men's sense of mutual responsibility has been able to follow it. Moreover, they have multiplied the powers of some and not of others, and equality of rights has not survived inequality of power. We are living in an interdependent and yet distrustful, suspicious world, with consequences painfully patent to us all. Abstract morality no doubt tells us that we cannot have dealings with other men without having thereby moral obligations towards them, and if we were ruled by abstract morality interdependence and the sense of moral obligation would coincide. But the morality of my station and its duties unfortunately depends upon but does not create a society in which exists an actual expectation of men keeping rules. It depends upon custom, upon mutual acquaintance and familiarity. It is in its very nature a closed and not an open morality. It depends upon such things as the knowledge of the "way in which people of our sort behave," of how you can expect a "gentleman" or an Englishman or an American to behave. Even

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we who have been for centuries under the influence of a universal religion like Christianity know how inclined we are to restrict our moral obligations to our own people. In the more primitive moralities which have been untouched by a universal religion, moral obligations are almost entirely confined to a man's own tribe or community. The stranger is almost by definition an enemy. To trust people one does not know is an adventurous and gallant thing to do: the morality of my station and its duties has much to be said for it, but it is not adventurous.

It follows that a world where the only morality is the morality of my station and its duties is a world of closed and often hostile societies, at variance or at war with one another. Such societies almost seem to gain solidarity and close co-operation within, as they are animated by a common hatred to those without the pale. Their unity and mutual trust is nursed on a sense that they are unique or of special value or of superior blood, contrasted with "lesser breeds without the law" or non-Aryans or Gentiles. This narrowness in ordinary morality is almost universal although, of course, it varies in degree. If we are slightly shocked to hear that in Latin the word "hostis" meant indifferently "an enemy" and "a stranger," we should remember that we ourselves, when we want to abuse a man, sometimes call him an outsider. Perhaps the

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noblest, certainly the greatest, treatise on the morality of my station and its duties is Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. It is a great appreciation of concrete morality embodied in the institutions of society and safeguarded by the power of the State. The State, by means of its force put behind the law, can make the morality of my station and its duties secure over a far wider area than that of a community which is dependent only on personal sympathies, feelings of kinship, and such personal bonds of confidence. The reverse side of this picture is that between States there is no morality, and as Hegel says, "the negative aspect of the state is war." We may generalise this and say: "War is the negative aspect of the morality of my station and its duties if this closed morality is unredeemed by the universal spirit of the Gospel."

The next thing to notice about the morality of my station and its duties is that it is necessarily imperfect, necessarily relative and necessarily changeable. This follows quite inevitably from the purpose served by rules. It is extremely important to see that this is so. The social purpose of all moral customs, codes, and of laws is, as we have seen, to give us an assured background to our actions. Most of our actions are co-operative, at least in the sense that they assume the behaviour of other people and assume that that behaviour will be of a certain kind. The main object

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of rules is to maintain rights: that is, to give us an assurance that within certain lines of action we and other people shall be protected from arbitrary interference. Other people's behaviour is necessarily an assumed background of ours, as our behaviour goes to make up a background to theirs. We all so much take that for granted that we hardly notice it. We are aware of it only, perhaps, when we change from one social atmosphere to another. We may find ourselves living in new moral surroundings where we say something like: "It is a dreadful place to live. You have to lock everything up all the time or it is just stolen, etc., etc.," or where on the contrary we can say: "It is wonderful to live with people like that. You can assume that every one only wants to help, that everybody is not trying to do every one else down." We can imagine how life must be changed in countries where, for all you know, any person you meet or talk to may be a spy, ready to denounce you to the authorities.

It is not just that such social atmospheres, created by the different moral codes which are practised in them, are pleasing or displeasing. They compel us to act differently. The actions which are wise in one social background are not wise in another. If you know that other people are ready to co-operate and help, you act in one way: if you know that they will

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do nothing of the kind, you act in another way. This is true even if you do not allow your purpose to be altered by what other people do or are prepared to do. Your ways of carrying it out are bound to be changed. There are people of whom we say, "He is a quite impossible person to work with. You never know what he will do next." That, as we say it, is usually an exaggeration, but it expresses the fundamental fact I am trying to emphasise. Being social persons, dependent on one another, and therefore co-operating, we cannot act fruitfully and wisely unless we know the rules which people will observe.

Moral rules, then, from a social point of view, are not ideal aspirations; not bare commands of any one; not judgements of how we think people ideally ought to behave. They are of no use unless they are generally kept. Therefore the conduct they prescribe must represent what men and women in society are on the whole prepared to do or, if you like, can be induced to do. To bring it about that moral codes and laws are observed with enough regularity to make a co-operating society, there has to be some social pressure, which plays its part, in all its various forms—from the approval or disapproval of your set to the utmost rigour of the law. But social pressure is the pressure exercised by most people. The rules which can be enforced on recalcitrant members of

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society must be rules which most people approve and are on the whole prepared to obey. Of course even the most respectable and virtuous amongst us may occasionally want to break rules of which in general we approve. We may really and sincerely believe in a speed limit and yet be tempted to disregard it on occasions, and we may also be deterred from disregarding it by the fear of a police fine. We most of us need social pressure of some kind to keep us up to the mark, though we may ourselves mean to keep up to that mark, and we most of us have what may be called an effective moral code—actions we really think we ought to do or refrain from. We can on the whole keep ourselves up to that or be kept up to it. The ideal moral code is not effective in the same way. We do not say, "Yes. I know we ought to forgive our enemies," with the same practical conviction as we say, "You had no right to order those things if you had no prospect of paying for them." The second expresses what is part of our effective moral code; the first, something which is not.

There is a passage in Trollope's *Last Chronicle of Barset* which puts admirably the contrast between a formal and a practical moral code.

"Lady Lufton had often heard her friend the archdeacon preach, and she well knew the high tone

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which he could take as to the necessity of trusting to our hopes for the future for all our true happiness: and yet she sympathised with him when he told her that he was broken-hearted because his son would take a step which might possibly interfere with his worldly prosperity. Had the archdeacon been preaching about matrimony, he would have recommended young men, in taking wives to themselves, especially to look for young women who feared the Lord. But in talking about his own son's wife, no word as to her eligibility or ineligibility in this respect escaped his lips. Had he talked on the subject till nightfall no such word would have been spoken. Had any friend of his own, man or woman, in discussing such a matter with him, and asking his advice upon it, alluded to the fear of the Lord, the allusion would have been distasteful to him and would have smacked to his palate of hypocrisy. Lady Lufton took all this in good part. The archdeacon had spoken out of his heart what was in his heart."

We may feel a little superior to the archdeacon when we read that, but *we* know in *our* hearts that our effective practical code is one thing and an ideal code, to which we may from time to time profess allegiance, another. We know the conduct we expect of ordinary

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decent people of our sort; that is, conduct we expect of them as a matter of course, and our expectations are not usually disappointed. But if expectations were of ideal conduct in ourselves or in others they generally would be disappointed. Behaviour we can rely upon, as is this practically effective code, is imperfect. We know it to be so if only by our contrast between it and an ideal or abstract code. We know this in ourselves, in the contrast between the way in which we can fairly undertake that we shall normally act and the very different standard of our highest and most heroic moments. We know it by the contrast between the behaviour of the decent average man and the conduct of the saint. The standard of conduct embodied in moral codes and laws can never be higher than the conduct that the decent average man is prepared to act up to. But saints, we know, pay no regard to such limitations.

We, therefore, who in various ways demand and expect a certain standard of conduct from others, and even enforce it by various kinds of social pressure, do not in so acting set out to be ourselves perfect people. We know perfectly well that we are finite, faulty beings. We know that, when compared with the perfection of God, we are all equally sinners. That does not and ought not to prevent our recognising that there are certain rules of behaviour which are essential to social co-operation and enforcing them.

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In practice we all recognise a rough and ready standard of behaviour in various situations and spheres of life. We see when people are falling below that standard, and we realise how precious the maintenance of that standard is when we set its results against anarchy, imperfect as the standard may be when set against an absolute standard. The standard, then, of my station and its duties is based upon the fact of how most people concerned are prepared to behave. An estimate of this fact is a matter of judgement or confidence, but it is a fact. Nevertheless it is a fact of an elusive nature—not a definite precise fact to be determined by scientific analysis. We all know in our experience of a small society that what its members are prepared to do depends on what is called its “tone”; and that that can be heightened by courageous and generous leadership and lowered by the lack of such leadership. We must most of us have seen the effect on a committee, or a meeting, or any group, of someone who says with confident assurance: “But of course we will do our best to help,” as we also, alas, probably know the opposite effect of the person who says: “I don’t see that we are called on to do anything. We have, after all, to consider ourselves.”

What holds good of a small society holds also, as we know, of a nation. Its “tone” can be, and is, raised or lowered. It will respond to leadership; it will

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become disillusioned and hard for lack of it. "What people are prepared to do," then, is a fact of the kind which Plato called "the more and less." It has a certain range of variation.

That is true. But if we are sensible we know that at any time it is a range within limits. To try to impose by any kind of social pressure a moral standard too high for the ordinary person, like the blue laws of early Massachusetts or recent Prohibition, only leads to disillusionment and hypocrisy and illegality. Imperfect rules, codes, and laws which are observed are far better than the most ideal laws which are not. For a rule which is not observed does not fulfil the function of a rule at all.

But because rules are imperfect, there seems to be a conflict between them and the commands of perfect love for all men which we find in the Sermon on the Mount. This leads men to say that rules, in so far as they are below that standard, ought not to exist or be valid in a Christian society. But in society as it exists—very imperfectly leavened by Christianity—there is no choice between having rules and being abandoned to lawless anarchy where force and violence reign triumphant. If we love our brethren, we must desire for their sake that there should be rules, and, as we have said, that the rules should be real and actual; should be in practice observed: and therefore

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in the name of love we are bound to see that the rules which most people can at best be induced to observe, should be observed, imperfect though these may be. We shall come back to this when we consider the relation between the morality of my station and its duties and the morality of the challenge to perfection.

The morality of my station and its duties, then, is necessarily imperfect. It is also necessarily relative. This almost follows from the implications of the phrase "my station and *its* duties." Other stations have other duties. But the relativity of this ordinary morality does not mean only that duties are relative to stations. The duties recognised in any society are relative to the historical and social circumstances of the society. The end of rules being the security and preservation of society, different rules are thought to be important in different stages of civilisation. The anthropologists have much to tell us on that subject. It is easier to realise it by reading with discrimination the Old Testament, or Homer, or a great modern book like Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*. If we read any of those three books with the least imagination, we shall see that the actions which are expected of a good man in a primitive pastoral society, for example, are very unlike the actions which we expect of a good man nowadays. Marx maintained that the morals of any society were only the expressions of its class

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structure, as that is the expression of its means of production. That is far too sweeping to be true but it has some basis. In different kinds of society different kinds of conduct are important for the preservation of society and get regarded as the all important virtues accordingly. The virtues and vices held up to social approval and disapproval are not the same in a hunting, a pastoral, and an industrial society. It is notorious, for example, that the approved and disapproved behaviour between the sexes has varied very much from time to time. We need not go to savages to discover that. If any one will read that illuminating work of Mr. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, he will find there an account of the origin and growth of what we should call the ideal of Christian marriage. He will be surprised to find how late in the history of Christianity that ideal appeared in the form in which we have taken it for granted. We have seen in our own times within the general framework of belief in Christian marriage a remarkable change in the conduct expected of men and women in their relation to one another. For example, the subplot of Trollope's novel, *The Prime Minister*, published in 1876, depends on the assumption that no decent young woman of the English middle class could possibly ask the young man to whom she was engaged how he made his living. Trollope is very careful to explain why neither

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the father nor the brother of the young woman made the necessary inquiries as it was their recognised duty to do. But it hardly seems to have entered his head that the young woman might have displayed a natural insistence to be told. If we inquire into how this change in the relations of men and women came about, part of the explanation—though not the whole of it—is economic. As the result of the Industrial Revolution many things which used to be done in the house are now done in factories, and it becomes less convincing to say that woman's place is the home. Economic changes have something to do with changes in the morality of my station and its duties. The economic explanation taken by itself is far too simple. The changes in human society and in morality are very subtle and due to all sorts of interwoven influences. But the fact of the changes and that they are related to other non-moral social changes is undoubted. It is well worth while to read a book like Leahy's *History of European Morals* or Hobhouse's *Morals in Evolution* to get some understanding how moral codes have changed; and how those changes have partly responded to, that is, been relative to other non-moral changes in the nature of society.

At the same time we may easily exaggerate the relativity of the morality of my station and its duties. If we read carefully an understanding account of the

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life of people living in societies very different from our own, we can recognise goodness and badness, however strange the actions are in which that goodness and badness are expressed. When I was a child we used to play on Sundays a game we called "Man or Woman?" One of the family thought of a Bible character, and the rest tried to discover what character he had thought of by asking questions which were answered by a simple "yes" or "no," or by a choice between two alternatives. We called it "Man or Woman?" because that was always our first question. Our second question was "Old or New Testament?" and our third was always "good or bad?" We confidently assumed that when we read the Old Testament we could tell the difference between a good man and a bad one. That confidence was on the whole justified, however great we saw to be the differences in some of the things the good men of the Old Testament did from the things good men at the present day would do. As children we felt instinctively that the fact that Jacob married both Leah and Rachel at the same time was irrelevant to the question whether he was good or bad, though we should not have thought the same of someone in this country who had committed bigamy. So now when we read the Icelandic Sagas we read the account of a society in which a man like the foster-father of Njal's sons was recognised to be an oddity

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because "he was not a mankiller." Yet that does not prevent us distinguishing between good and bad men, nor indeed between merciful and cruel men in the Sagas. Gunnar and Njal in Njal Saga were, like most of their people, quite ready to fight on the occasions when a man was expected to fight; they obviously regarded sea-roving or piracy as the occupation of a gentleman, but they were nevertheless fine, noble men. As we read Njal Saga we recognise that; we should like to have known them. So on the other hand we see, to take the same story, that Hallgerda was a bad woman and that the Saga is right to think she was.

Travellers who have lived among cannibals will tell the same tale: that some of them are "bad hats" and some are "very decent fellows," though even the latter if let loose in our society would have to alter their behaviour a great deal to be counted decent. For one part of decency is to respect the general rules of the community, not to do things "which are not done."

But the ordinary man—and that includes most of us—doesn't worry about the moral assumptions of his society. He accepts them and takes them for granted almost as if they were rules of the game and nothing else; but something more than the rules of our particular game does come in. There is nothing out of the way in saying of a man or a boy that he has learnt

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“to play the game.” But to answer that commendation by saying “What game? Rugby or Association?” is to misunderstand the commendation. The praise means that whatever the rules of a particular game may be, he doesn’t take advantage of them for mean purposes: he shows a generosity of spirit in them all. So though rules of justice may and do vary, we can appraise a just judge even when we think the rules he administers are barbarous. The virtues—at least some of them—seem to be oddly independent of the variation in the actions virtuous people think it right to do. If any code of moral rules is to work, men have to display a certain amount of unselfishness, of honesty, of truthfulness and of courage. People differ a lot in different states of society in the spheres in which and the persons in regard to whom their moral judgments are sensitive and active. They may be really truthful where it is agreed that a gentleman is truthful and yet lie like anything in horse-copping because it is tacitly agreed that horse-copping is a game where neither side really pretends to tell the truth. So they may think that some people like slaves or foreigners, or some classes of women, do not count, and yet act with courtesy and forbearance to those whom they consider to be their equals. But in spite of all these arbitrary conventions, a good man will behave in a way which is recognisable—as showing the same spirit

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—in the most different kinds of society with the most different moral codes.

Of course the difference between different codes of morals cannot be abstracted from goodness or badness as easily as the difference of the rules of different games can be abstracted from good or bad sportsmanship. The different codes of morals are not just different as fashions or games are different. Some are high codes; some are degraded codes. There is such a thing as moral progress and moral degradation. If the code is degraded, the virtues flourish with difficulty under it.

It is worth while also to note that experience shows that men who are in some way or another taken out of a moral environment—however imperfect the standard of the environment may be—suffer and go to pieces morally unless they get the support of another moral environment. The testimony of missions shows abundantly that men and women who have lived all their lives under a low and degraded moral code can rise to great heights of Christian conduct if they live in a Christian fellowship with the support and inspiration of a Christian society. On the other hand, when primitive people are only taken out of their primitive society and traditions without being given any better moral code, they tend to go to pieces altogether. The man who has lost his natural code and social setting

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and not got another to take its place has usually little or no morality. This of course applies to everybody in some degree. The only difference is that in primitive societies social sentiment is stronger and individualism and individual responsibility weaker than in a more civilised society. The member of a primitive society is therefore less able to stand alone when the moral support of his society is withdrawn. He succumbs more quickly. But we all depend upon the moral support of our society and learn from its discipline. The graces of the morality which goes beyond the morality of my station and its duties are the flower of a humbler plant. All men, even saints, have to go to school with ordinary imperfect relative morality before they can learn to go beyond it. The law, said St. Paul, is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. As originality and genius in music come not from those who scorn but from those who have gone to school with the conventions they transcend so it is in conduct. None of us can do without the morality of my station and its duties—however imperfect and relative the morality may be.

So much for the imperfection and the relativity of the morality of my station and its duties. That it is changeable has been already noted in discussing its relativity. But when we call morality relative, we mean that it is related to non-moral factors—economic

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facts and situations, for example. Because that is so, the moral standard or code of a society may change when the non-moral factors change. But there are also changes which are genuine moral changes. We have alluded to this already when we talked of the changing moral tone of any society. Some of the great changes in moral standards come from morally gifted individuals—the prophets or the saints. There are men who are more sensitive than their fellows to moral values. They show us things to which we have been blind; evils to which we have been callous; possibilities of the good life which we have never imagined. Their usual fate is opposition and sometimes martyrdom, for they are challenging us to raise our whole standard of behaviour. “Your fathers slew the prophets and ye build their tombs” is continually true. We shall have more to say of this kind of moral progress when we come to discuss the morality of the challenge to perfection.

But it is also true that standards and codes—what I have described as the rules of the game—change and improve when the members of a society play the game well: act up to their lights without troubling their heads very much about how good their lights are. We all know people whom in our superior way we are apt to call conventional, who by their faithfulness and integrity make sweet the moral environment

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in which they move. They have no revelations for others. They are not prophets or saints: but somehow by the spirit in which they fulfil the accepted obligations of their station and their society, they make those obligations in themselves different: they raise the standard by being superlatively faithful to its demands. This is not hard to explain. The faithful keeping of rules, "to a man's own hurt" if need be, always involves some amount of unselfishness, some amount of consideration for the rights of others. Justice, even in the elementary sense of observing social rules, is the great preservative of society. It involves a universal element, treating others as you expect them to treat you. But the actual rules prevalent in any society are never entirely just: they are often unfair, one-sided and partial. Justice is expressed imperfectly in concrete rules. But men and women who approach imperfect rules in a spirit of justice usually even out to some extent the injustices of the rules. Plato, while maintaining that even imperfect societies hold together because of justice, also held that, properly speaking, justice only existed in the ideal state where men set before themselves a true conception of the purpose of society. The justice which holds a bad society imperfectly together is itself imperfect and inadequate—a copy or an analogy of true justice. He would hold therefore that if we started

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with the idea of justice in an imperfect society and resolutely determined to make that imperfect justice real, we should have, in the process of doing so, to transform the society. If we do nothing more than determine to be just, we shall find ourselves necessarily improving our existing and imperfect conception of justice.

The truth of this can be seen most interestingly in the development of Roman law. The greatness of the system of Roman law was largely due to the fact that it grew out of an attempt by the Romans to work out principles of law which should apply to people of different countries—who had each their own special domestic law. It had therefore a universality which the conventional or largely customary law of a particular community never has. The Romans called this universal law the Law of Nations. They also got from the Stoics the notion of a universal elementary law governing the relations of men to one another, discoverable by the reason implanted in every one, which they called the Law of Nature. The Law of Nations and the Law of Nature were said to be identical with some exceptions. One such exception was slavery. For the Roman lawyers recognised that slavery was a common institution of all nations, though on the universal principles of right between man and man it could not be justified.

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This is an excellent illustration of how far the general principle of fairness expressed in “playing the game” and worked out more elaborately in the work of good lawyers will go. It goes a long way but it will not usually overcome such deep-seated injustices and imperfections as was the institution of slavery in the ancient world.

The society in which we live is full of inconsistencies as obvious as those of the different national laws on which Roman law was superimposed. It is a largely disintegrated society, not living up to its own imperfect professions. There are many things in it which shock the most ordinary unenlightened conscience. Consider, for example, the fact of widespread unemployment. What is to happen to the morality of my station and its duties if there are hundreds of thousands to whom is given no station and no function in society, and therefore presumably no duties? There is more than enough in this society of ours for the ordinary decent man to do, if, though he does not worry his head much about ideals and has conventional ideas about right and wrong, he has been taught “to play the game.” No doubt he will not face up to the drastic revision of the rules of the game which the challenge to perfection demands, and he may therefore resent that challenge. But if he does his best to see that the game as he understands it is

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played fairly, he will in practice do much to change the rules. "Playing the game" is a pagan morality but it *is* morality. If it is carried out honestly, it will find itself confronted with the challenge to perfection and will have to face that challenge. But because it is, so far as it goes, real and honest, it is better than the pseudo-Christian morality of those who will not play the game at all because they cannot find a game with perfect rules.

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Challenge to Perfection or the Morality of Grace*

THE morality of my station and its duties covers for most of us the greater part of our life. We do what is expected of us: we fulfil the obligations which we and other people recognise without much thinking about it: we spend our time going about our work, and indeed much of what we call our religion is often taken over by us, unthinkingly, as part of this morality of our station.

But to all of us morality also comes, at least occasionally, in another way: as a call or a challenge, a demand that we should take part in a new crusade, an original adventure. That is the most striking and dramatic form in which this other morality presents itself, though it may also show something of itself when men give more than what is expected of them in the way of the duties of their station, in what Wordsworth describes as

That best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love.

This challenging, revolutionary morality is not

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something we take for granted: we do not demand it of other people though we rejoice when we meet it. It seems to have little or nothing to do with our station and its duties. The terms obligation and duty seem to fit it as badly as they fit well the morality of "my station."

Sometimes it seems as though into the closed sphere of our ordinary accepted duties there came a call from the outside asking us to do something quite different from what we should normally do. The Society of Friends have a word for that when they talk of "having a concern" to do this or that. The concern is not a demand on them by society: it may drive them to do what society despises or fears.

Plato defined justice as doing one's business. This morality of challenge seems to summon us to do things which are not in the ordinary sense our business: indeed sometimes to desert our business in order to attend to them. There seem to be no fixed rules or clear-cut principles to decide when we should listen to such a summons.

We naturally connect this morality of perfection with Christianity, and indeed its greatest exposition is given in the Sermon on the Mount and such parables as the parable of the Good Samaritan. But it is found in a different form in Buddhism, in some elements in Hinduism, in the Judaism of the Prophets and to some

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extent in Greek philosophy. Christian teaching connects it with grace as contrasted with law.

This morality of grace or challenge seems to be contrasted with the morality of my station and its duties in at least the following ways.

(1) It is not what is expected of you. It cannot be said to be owed to any other person. We do not claim that others should do acts of grace to us nor expect other persons to claim as a right that we should do acts of grace to them. Dr. Bosanquet described ordinary morality as "the world of claims and counter-claims." The kind of conduct which this morality asks for is outside that world. If we can say—as perhaps we can—that we have a duty to respond to the highest demands that we can hear, other people have not a corresponding *right* to such response in us. It is often said in textbooks on moral theory that rights and duties are reciprocal—where there are duties there are rights: and where there are rights there are duties. That reciprocity holds, I think, in the morality of my station and its duties, but not in the morality of grace. We can see that most clearly when we consider forgiveness. It is not absurd to say that it is our duty to forgive those who have wronged us. But to say that they have a right to be forgiven is surely to misapprehend altogether the nature of forgiveness. We know perfectly well when

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we have injured others, that we have no right or claim that we should be forgiven. If someone came to us and said, "I have done a wrong to So-and-so, but he is a Christian and therefore it is his duty to forgive me," we should reply, "Well, it is hardly for you to say that." The same holds of all acts of grace. Is it not indeed of the nature of love that we do not deserve it: that desert is neither here nor there in the matter? This does not only apply to acts of heroic devotion in sainthood. Ordinary human intercourse is kept sweet by all manner of charming, jolly things which people do to one another, where the notion of reciprocal rights and duties is just nonsense. I remember arguing with a moral philosopher who was earnestly contending that all duties implied rights and all rights duties, and that at any given moment there was only one right thing for any one to do: that that was his duty: and that someone else had a right that he should so act. One of the party, seeing that in the heat of his argument he had let his pipe go out, silently placed a box of matches at his hand. The rest of us, seeing that nice gracious little act, said, "There! Had you a right that she should have done that? Of course you hadn't"; and for the moment at least he was non-plussed.

(2) We saw that the morality of my station and its duties implied that there was at least a reasonable

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assurance that other people would act as we were ourselves prepared to act: that in it we were all responsible to one another. Hence indeed the reciprocity of rights and duties: hence the connection between the securities of my station and its duties and rules. But the morality of grace or challenge is not concerned with such assurance or such reciprocity. "If ye love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same?" The version of the same saying in St. Luke's Gospel says, "What grace ( $\chiαριτων$ ) have you?" and Canon Crum, commenting on this appearance of the word "grace" says, "a new word for a new thing." It would appear to follow that the morality of challenge, because not reciprocal, is not relative in the same way as the other morality. There is all the difference between "Do unto others as you *would* that they should do unto you," and "Do unto others as you *think* that others will do unto you." There is no *grace* in the second. Christian teaching got from the example and teaching of Jesus the notion of giving which is free, outgoing, giving: what it came to describe as the redeeming grace of God. St. Paul told the Ephesians that they were to be "freely giving or forgiving to one another ( $\chiαριτων$ ) even as God in Christ gave freely to you." It is the same word, grace, and the idea of it goes back to Matthew v. 45: "That ye may be sons of your father

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which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Though the notion of grace—free giving which takes no count of what others may do in return, is set forth in the Gospels; something like it is found in other expressions of the morality of challenge. It is found in Plato's repudiation in the Republic of the teaching that "it is just to harm your enemies": even in the reflection of Aristotle's priggish hero, the great-souled man who likes to do good but is ashamed of having good done to him. The fine pride of the man who says, "I'm not concerned with what other people do. Decent conduct is what I owe to myself," falls far short of the beauty of the grace described in the Gospels but equally with grace it repudiates the spirit of the passage in Hobbes: "He that should be modest and tractable and perform all he promises in such time and place, where no man else should do so, should but make himself a prey to others and procure his own certain ruin, contrary to the ground of all laws of nature, which tend to nature's preservation."

(3) In the morality of my station and its duties, the duties are of the station and are therefore more or less fixed and plainly defined. The morality of challenge assumes that we shall do more than a duty

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demanded of us, but it does not give us a scale of how much more; does not say, "there is one definite right according to one morality and the addition of a certain percentage will give you what is right according to the standard of the morality of challenge." It is not as though in the one morality you drove off from the ladies' tee and in the other from the medal tee. When the disciple asked, "How oft shall I forgive my brother—unto seven times?" and was answered, "Unto seventy times seven," that answer did not mean that on the four hundred and ninety-first offence he need not forgive. It meant that there was no limit. If the objection be made: "Yes, but that does imply that there is always one right thing to do—namely, to forgive;" the answer is that "forgiveness" is not a simple uniform action: it is giving back love to enmity and there is no measure of the way you behave to people you love. We do not think when we are considering what to give as a present to someone we are fond of that there is one right present and one only. We can sometimes think of lots of jolly things we should like to give him or her. However much the mother may on Christmas morning say to each child who has been secretly preparing a present for her, "That was just the one thing I should have chosen," we know that is not really so, and is, indeed, neither here nor there.

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The one thing she would have chosen is what she has got—the child so nicely and solemnly planning its present, but the actual present does not matter, or hardly at all. Any given situation demands at least what is just: but once that condition of justice is satisfied there is no rule for “works of supererogation.” There may be one *right* thing to do in any given situation, but the right thing may be bare of grace or may take on innumerable forms of beauty. The morality of grace implies creativeness and initiative and imagination. In the morality of grace there may be many alternative actions which are equally “right.” It would be as absurd to say that there was only one thing a really good man would do as to say that there was only one poem a poet could write in a given situation.

There are nine and sixty ways  
Of constructing tribal lays  
And every single one of them is right.

Grace is not a thing which can be measured or calculated. There is in it, indeed, a certain extravagance. That is surely the moral of the story of the woman with “the alabaster cruise of exceeding precious ointment.” There ought to be in the highest kind of conduct a touch of recklessness, not caring, not counting the cost to ourselves. The morality of grace cannot be codified. There is always a touch of

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the infinite about it. This does not mean that we cannot and should not think about what we should do to others in fulfilling the demands of this creative morality. To say that there is not only *one* right poem to be written in one situation, does not mean that the poet does not think, to get a poem right. When we are considering what present to give to someone, we of course want the present to be appropriate. When we think of various things we can do to people we are fond of and who are in distress, we think of course of what will help most—but we do not ordinarily suppose there is just one thing to be done like an answer to a sum. The contrast between the two moralities in this matter is almost this. In the morality of my station and its duties the station presents us with the duty, and we say “Yes” or “No.” “I will” or “I will not.” We choose between obeying or disobeying a given command. In the morality of challenge or grace the situation says, “Here is a mess, a crying evil, a need! What can you do about it?” We are asked not to say “Yes” or “No” or “I will” or “I will not,” but to be inventive, to create, to discover something new. The difference between ordinary people and saints is not that saints fulfil the plain duties which ordinary men neglect: the things saints do have not usually occurred to ordinary people at all: the ordinary man could not say “No” or “I will not” to the

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thought of such actions since he has not envisaged them. When we look back at a call of need to which we have made some sort of response, there sometimes occurs to us something else we might have done, and we say, "Oh! I wish I had thought of that." But we do not normally feel moral reprobates for not so having thought, as we do for not having done a plain duty. "Gracious" conduct is somehow like the work of an artist. It needs imagination and spontaneity. It is not a choice between presented alternatives but the creation of something new.

(4) The morality of my station and its duties, serving as it does the ends of social security, is not always easy to distinguish from prudence and enlightened selfishness. The morality of challenge or grace is different, just because it is outside the sphere of claims and counter-claims or doing as you expect to be done by.

(5) The morality of my station and its duties is a "closed morality." It is the morality of a definite community. Its duties are duties to members of the community. They arise from the community. It is characteristic of such morality to have no regard to people outside the community or to treat them as enemies. The morality of challenge or grace knows no such limitation: it is not concerned with this or that social structure. "Tell me, which now of these

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three was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?’ And he said, ‘He that showed mercy on him.’” The test of neighbourhood is not, as the word implies, a position in a community, but need for help on the one hand and power to help on the other. This morality is not “closed” but “open.” The community it thinks of is the brotherhood of men.

(6) The morality of challenge or grace is, far more than the morality of my station and its duties, concerned with the inner life: a man’s motives rather than his outward actions; with what a man is rather than what he does. It regards the outer act as significant as an expression of the inner life. This is of course especially evident in the Sermon on the Mount in such passages as Matthew v. 21 and 27, but the same stress on the inner life is found in Greek philosophy and in the moral value attached to contemplation, for example, in Buddhism and Hinduism.

(7) As the morality of my station and its duties tends to think of the individual as existing to serve the ends of society, so the other morality tends to think of society as existing for the perfection of individual souls. Its universality and its teaching of equality come from the infinite value it sets on human personality. It tends to regard the world as, in the words of Keats, “a vale of soul-making.”

(8) Although this morality may take over from the

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other the sense of obligation, its primary appeal is not to duty and obligation but to love and admiration.

(9) The morality of challenge or grace is normally, though not invariably, connected with religion. Its demands are not thought of as our demands, nor as the demands of society: its demands and its challenge are the challenge of God. But while this is normally the case, it is not true to say, as Mr. Walter Lippman seems to suggest in his *Preface to Morals*, that the acceptance of the claims of this morality depend upon the prior acceptance of theological beliefs. The theological beliefs are as often the result of the acceptance of the moral challenge as the acceptance of the moral challenge is the result of the religious beliefs. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God." It is possible and indeed necessary to discuss the moral problem involved in the relation between the two moralities without discussing the relation between morality and religion. Indeed, as Bergson has pointed out, there is a form of religion corresponding to the closed morality of my station and its duties as there is a form of religion corresponding to what Bergson calls "open morality"—what has been called the morality of challenge or of grace.

These general characteristics distinguish this morality from the morality of my station and its

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duties. But we shall probably understand the problem of the relation of the two moralities better if we consider the challenge of this second morality as it is found in its greatest expression in the Sermon on the Mount.

The challenge of the Sermon on the Mount is, I think, expressed most decisively in verses 43-48 of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. It may be convenient to set them down.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.

“‘But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you:

“‘That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

“‘For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?

“‘And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?

“‘Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’”

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Some of the demands of this passage are obvious. We are not to allow our conduct to other people to be determined by their conduct to us. This is put in the most dramatic way possible in the command, "Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you." The reciprocity which is characteristic of my station and its duties could not be more forcibly repudiated. Our duty to love our neighbour has been expanded into a duty to love all men as the children of God. If we ask, "How can we possibly love all men?" the answer is given in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. What we are to consider is men's need and our power of helping. We are to help ungrudgingly when we can, regardless of how those we can help have behaved or are behaving to us. But what is meant by the demand that we are to be perfect and that the standard of our perfection is to be God, our Father in Heaven? Is that not an impossible demand and an impossible standard?

There are those who hold that if Jesus told man to be perfect as God is perfect, that must mean that we can, if we will, here and now attain such perfection. We must assume that Jesus did not demand the impossible. If what he demands seems to us impossible, that is only because we are relying on our own strength and our own moral insight. But if we will surrender ourselves to the control and the

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guidance of God, our actions, they hold, will necessarily be perfect here and now. Our natural inclination, it is emphasised, is to compromise, to do the will of God up to a point, to have reservations and make conditions. What is wanted for perfection is complete surrender to the will of God. We can make that surrender if we choose. It is for us to will it. If we do that, we can attain perfection.

This assumes either that we have in the Sermon on the Mount a complete and absolute moral code or, alternatively, that if we surrender our will to God, we can thereby get infallible guidance as to what is perfect conduct.

Each of these positions is untenable. The Sermon on the Mount, for instance, tells us to love our enemies. That is an understandable demand. But it does not tell us what action towards our enemies love would dictate. We are, all of us, so far away from really loving our enemies that we seldom get the length of asking seriously how we should act towards them if we really did. It is better to take the simpler case. Do we quite simply know how we ought to act towards people whom we instinctively love? Everybody will admit that the fact that a mother loves her children does not automatically tell her how to treat them: that to act towards them wisely she may think

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and consider and use all the mind and imagination she has and yet feel something is wanting. Wise action towards those we love may need more thought and knowledge than we possess. It is true that loving people helps us to understand them, kindles our imagination, and so sets us on our way to learning how to act wisely towards them. But it can do no more than set us on the way.

Experience tells us that we *become* wiser in learning how to behave to people when we love: that we can grow in moral sensitiveness and understanding: but we have to start in humility, knowing that we have to go to school and learn lessons in the morality of Grace. Is there any one who does not know men or women of marked moral insight, sensitiveness of moral feeling and moral tact: persons in whose judgement on difficult moral questions we should trust? Can any one deny that such people are growing in grace and wisdom?

No doubt the Sermon on the Mount in other verses—notably in the 21st to the 42nd verses of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew—contains more definite prescriptions of conduct. But, as we shall see, if we accept the instructions given there as literal commands to be always followed, we shall get into serious moral difficulties; find ourselves doing things which we cannot really think are dictated by love of our

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neighbour or of our enemy. There are times when it holds that

He who loves his Enemies betrays his Friends;  
This surely is not what Jesus intends;

and, besides, these definite commands cover a very small part of life and give us no instructions as to the rest.

But what reason is there why we should not have to use our minds as much in the sphere of grace as in the sphere of law? We owe our neighbours our earnest thought and imaginative consideration just as much as we owe them our good intentions.

The doctrine, that if we surrender our will to God we shall have infallible guidance as to what we ought to do, and can therefore here and now act perfectly, is difficult to refute by argument. I can only say that I have not found the persons who profess to act on this principle to be remarkable for moral insight and sensitiveness. Rather they have seemed to me to put great energy and force into doing what they have always without reflection assumed to be right. Because they explicitly reject the need in conduct of disciplined reflection and self-criticism, their moral consciences are on the whole blunter and more insensitive than those of the unsurrendered.

The lives of the Saints bear witness that when men

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give up conditions and bargainings and limitations and are entirely ready to do what is revealed to them to be right, they have to learn and grow in moral insight; the growth is gradual; their insight is progressive. If we faithfully do the best that we see, we come to see a better beyond. We become morally sensitive to conduct about which we were before insensitive.

If this is so, how then can we be asked, as we are in this verse, to be perfect with the perfection of God? We can at least understand what it means negatively. The standard set before us is an infinite one, beyond our grasp and attainment. But its operation is positive, making us press on beyond any standard we may have actually reached; be ready always to learn more; take no camp for a continuing city.

That is after all the attitude we adopt in seeking for truth. It is an old story that it is fatal in the pursuit of knowledge to say, "This is the last word in the matter. Now I have no more to learn," and so on. The fruitful attitude in the pursuit of knowledge is to assume that what there is to know is inexhaustible: that there is always more to be found out, that we are to be ready to correct our present findings in the light of further discoveries and better thinking, to know always that we do not know. The perfect *attitude* of the man of science is one of humility

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and faith: recognition of how little we yet know and faith that if we go on as we have begun we shall know more and more. Humility and faith are equally essential in the morality of grace. The last way to attain perfection is to suppose that it can be attained automatically or at once. We can set our faces in the direction of it. That is the only way in which we can fulfil the command to attain an end which is infinite. If our standard is to be the perfection of God, then our standard is infinite and its constant and effective working in us will be to make us realise that we can never rest on our attainments, must realise that we may have further insight and moral illumination.

This follows inevitably if we think seriously, as we must, of the infinity of God and the inexhaustible character of that infinity. As Von Hügel insisted so often, "We can apprehend but we cannot comprehend God." If infinity is to be our standard, it is a standard of a peculiar kind. The standard of the kingdom of God is the standard of perfection, but this kingdom Jesus said we were to compel men to come into, were to insist on sharing. Whereas we often use moral standards as a means of exclusion. That is the sort of standard we find in the morality of my station and its duties. "If you can't behave like a gentleman, you mayn't belong to the club." "If you don't fulfil certain

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defined regulations, you can't have the advantages of citizenship." Such a standard says "At least this." "Unless you at least profess your faith in certain articles of religion, you may not be a member of this Church." But such standards are not standards of perfection. If God is to be the standard of perfection, there cannot be any definite, finished off, once-for-all pattern. There is no upper limit to perfection. If the young man of many possessions had listened to Jesus when he said, "One thing thou lackest," and had sold all that he had and given to the poor, he would not have found there was then no more to do. But he would not have afterwards come back to Jesus and said, "You deceived me when you said there was only one thing lacking. I did that and am conscious of lots of things still to do." He would have got into a new world where his original questions were no longer asked and such answers did not need to be given. He would have become conscious of a new kind of standard altogether.

No one who accepts the teaching of Jesus about perfection can then ever sit down and say, "Well, now I am good. I have attained perfection."

This at once makes a great difference between this teaching and that of many other systems of morals. There have often been attempts to prescribe the conduct of the man without fault. If you are to be really

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good, you must do this and that, fulfil those and those obligations. If you act exactly after this and that manner, you are good. Such ideals have been described as difficult but attainable. But if our conduct is to be regulated by the perfection of God's standard, that is something we can never complete. "Why callest thou me good? There is but one good—God," Jesus said to the young man who had kept at least six commandments from his youth up.

The Christian life is not the fulfilling of a prescribed code of exacting duties. It demands an attitude towards a perpetual quest, always something more to do and something more to find out.

No describable pattern of life can be the last word in Christian conduct. A Christian is a man who is always trying to be something better than he is. There is a sense in which no man is a Christian—the paradoxical sense that a man is a Christian only when he acknowledges that he is not completely one. For this reason, as for others, there cannot be a complete Christian code of law or code of conduct, or a completely Christian society.

This explanation of the meaning of the challenge to perfection is at fundamental odds with the other interpretation we rejected. It is therefore worth considering a passage in the Epistle to the

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Philippians where St. Paul uses the word “perfect” in a way which confirms the interpretation for which I have argued.

The passage is Philippians iii. 12-16:

“Not that I have already attained or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren I count not myself yet to have apprehended: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before. I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you: only, whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk.”

We “that are perfect” are to realise that we are “not made perfect,” that we have not yet understood all there is to understand or attained all there is to attain. We are in a sense perfect just because we realise that and have a standard towards which we are set. We are never “made perfect” because that standard is always beyond us. In the meantime, “whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let

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us walk." We are to act on the light we have got, hoping for more light and ready to act by that more light when it comes. The paradox of Christian perfection is seen in the fact that the same man who said, "we that are perfect," also said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Those "who are perfect" in the sense that they accept this challenge and enter on this quest are far more than others conscious of imperfection. Because they accept the challenge of verse 22, they know that they are guilty of what is sinful in murder; because they accept the challenge of verse 28, they know they are guilty of adultery. It is not characteristic of the Christian saint to be conscious of his own perfection. Just because he has accepted the challenge of the perfection of God, he is deeply conscious of his own imperfection.

If these then are the implications of the morality of grace, how is it related to the morality of my station and its duties? The contrast between them is clearly marked in these verses. The publicans or the Gentiles play their part in the morality of my station and its duties. That, as we have seen, must pay consideration to what other people do. The morality of grace says at least that we are to pay no regard to what other people do to us. Does this mean, as it might appear to mean, that the two moralities are

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opposed and that the morality of grace ought, for those who accept it, entirely to supersede because it contradicts the morality of my station and its duties?

There are verses in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew which seem to suggest this. If the commands contained in verses 34 to 42 are taken literally, as universal commands to be always obeyed, they would make the morality of my station and its duties impossible. They are, I think, the only verses in the Gospels which raise the problem in this acute form. Nobody can think the commands in verse 44, to love your enemy, bless them that curse you and so on, *easy* to carry out, but they do not imply an actual conflict with the morality of human society as such. To be told that we are never to resist evil does imply such a conflict. Civil society with the morality of my station and its duties is an organised resistance to evil.

This will be plain if we reflect on the implications of verse 40: "If any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." If this is a vivid dramatic way of saying that we are not always to stand on our legal rights, that we are to be ready to rise above the world of claims and counter-claims and be prepared to be better than can be reasonably demanded of us, it is of a piece with the

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general teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. But if it means that all resistance to unjust demands is wrong, and that wrongdoing should be rewarded, then the whole machinery of law and justice is clearly wrong, and we should have nothing to do with this machinery. But most of us, even though we agreed not to think of our personal advantage, might still think it was our painful duty to resist legal blackmail, and to consent to a prosecution to aid the law to take its course. The reason for this is plain, as we said before. If we love our neighbours or, for that matter, our enemies, we must desire that there should be rules and we must desire that those rules should be maintained and be prepared to do our part in maintaining them. I do not see how we can escape that conclusion. If when we are told "resist not evil," we are being told to have nothing to do with that maintenance of rules which resists evil, then we are told something which is incompatible with loving our neighbours. That is the real point at issue between those who do and those who do not accept those particular verses literally. Those who accept them but not literally maintain that, taken literally, they are inconsistent even with the command to love your enemies. It is not the most loving thing to do always to act quite literally on the command, "Give to him that asketh thee." Being sentimental is not ordinarily

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being unselfish. It is refusing to give people your mind as well as your heart. Real love has sometimes to be hard, as any one can see who reads the Gospels with his eyes open. The morality of grace then cannot simply supersede or abolish the morality of my station and its duties.

It has sometimes been suggested that these two moralities apply to different sets of people. The morality of grace is only for the few: for those who have accepted its challenge—for the salt of the earth. The implication is thus drawn that these are to form a separate community and in that community—the Church—exhibit the morality of grace. Possible conflict between the two moralities is avoided by the separation of the two communities—the World and the Church.

We shall consider later the conception of the Church as a separate moral community when we consider the teaching of St. Paul about slavery. But it is important to see at once that the separation can never be so absolute as to do away with the possibility of conflict between the two moralities.

It was natural for the early Christians to think in terms of almost complete separation between themselves and the society in which they found themselves. They were an insignificant minority in a society whose laws had no regard for their views, a society over

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which they had no control and for which they had no responsibility. It was not their business to maintain the rules which kept society from anarchy. The Roman Empire and the Roman armies looked after that. The Christians suffered its exactions patiently and also enjoyed its protection. Their duty towards it was stated in a famous passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans xiii. 1-7, where they are told, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." But when the minority became a majority and Christians found themselves as Christians responsible for the rules governing society and preventing it from dissolving into anarchy, the separation of moral responsibility broke down. The Church, too, just because it became a large and established community developed its own relative standard of the morality of my station and its duties, and in consequence the challenge of grace was realised to be as much a challenge to the standard imposed by the help of the Church upon all its members as it had been a challenge to "what the Gentiles do." It is implied, as we have seen, in the challenge to perfection that the rules and code of no community can be perfect. The distinction of communities bound by different standards took on a new form within Christendom in the distinction between those devoted to "religion" in a

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monastic community or a religious order and those Christians who lived a secular life.

That there is value in the existence within society of communities or fellowships avowedly trying to work out and express a higher standard of conduct than society as a whole expresses, is undoubted. But we cannot solve the problem of the relation of the two moralities merely by such a distinction.

The few who accept the full challenge of the morality of grace may not pray to be taken out of the world. They have to live in it. If they are called to be the salt of the earth, salt does not do its work by being kept in a salt-cellar, but by being applied to what it is to salt. It is of course true that there are and ought to be communities within society where the morality of grace has freer play than it has in others, just as there ought to be nursery gardens and laboratories as well as fields and dispensing chemists. The world of claims and counter-claims ought not to be in evidence in a family. It is not difficult for friends who have a common devotion to form a fellowship or group where rules are at a minimum and freedom and spontaneity are at a maximum. There are sections of society which by the fortune of their situation are less under the constraint of rules than others. An academic community, for example, may often be in such a favoured position.

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But it is mere hypocrisy for such separate communities or fellowships to pride themselves on their superior standards and not to realise that their freedom and their distinctive life are made possible by the protection which society gives them, and should be paid for by a large return of responsible and informed service. If they can lead a life which seems to have little to do with forcible resistance to evil, it is because other people are doing the ordinary work of society and fulfilling its ordinary duties, and so saving them and others from violence and anarchy. We cannot escape from the necessities of social life or from our responsibility for the organisation of society. If we think of the ordinary carrying on of society, meeting its economic needs and maintaining and expressing its rules as morally "dirty work," we have no right to let other people do *our* moral dirty work for us; and it *is* our moral dirty work if our fortunate position is made possible by such work. It is right and fitting that in any society men and women, as they have different gifts should have different functions, but it is entirely un-Christian to think of one of those functions being morally superior to another. Once I accept it as necessary, for example, that there should be prisons, I proclaim as it were automatically that being a prison warder can be as Christian an occupation as being a bishop or a philosopher.

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But if we cannot escape from society and the accepted standard of my station and its duties, what are we to do? Are we asked to accept according to the standard of my station and its duties what we seem to be asked to repudiate according to the standard of perfection?

## CHAPTER IV

### *A Consideration of St. Paul's Teaching on Slavery and of its Implications*

THE conflict between the two moralities of "my station and its duties," and of grace, is felt most acutely in the conflict between the behaviour implied in some of the institutions of society and the morality of grace. "How can a Christian," some people say nowadays, "have anything to do with war?" Others say, "How can a Christian have anything to do with Capitalism?"

The institution of slavery in the ancient world obviously gave rise to this conflict in an acute form in the Christian Church, and it is worth while considering how St. Paul dealt with it.

The civilisation of the Roman world was based upon slavery. That slavery was a horrible social evil there can be no doubt. There is a famous passage about it in the fourth volume of Mommsen's *History of Rome*: "Whenever the government of capitalists in a slave state has fully developed itself," he says, "it has desolated God's fair world in the same way. As rivers glisten in different colours, but a common sewer everywhere looks itself, so the Italy of the Ciceronian epoch resembles substantially the Hellas of Polybius

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and still more decidedly the Carthage of Hannibal's time, where in exactly similar fashion the all-powerful rule of capital ruined the middle class, raised trade and estate farming to the highest prosperity, and ultimately led to a—hypocritically whitewashed—moral and political corruption of the nation. All the arrant sins that Capital has been guilty of against nation and civilisation in the modern world, remain as far inferior to the abominations of the ancient capitalist-states as the free man, be he ever so poor, remains superior to the slave, and not until the dragon-seed of North America ripens" (Mommsen was writing before 1860) "will the world have again similar fruits to reap." And in an earlier passage he says, "The abyss of misery and woe, which opens before our eyes in this most miserable of all proletariates, we leave to be fathomed by those who venture to gaze into such depths; it is very possible that compared with the sufferings of the Roman slaves, the sum of all negro suffering is but a drop."

Now think of the demands we all constantly make nowadays that the Church should take a stand against the plain social evils of the day: and then put by this passage from Mommsen these words of St. Paul: "Slaves, be obedient to your masters—as unto Christ . . . as slaves of Christ: doing your slavery from the heart."

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So again in Colossians: "Slaves, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eye service as men-pleasers: but in singleness of heart, fearing God. . . . You are slaves of your lord Christ. Masters, give unto your slaves that which is equal and just, knowing that you also have a master in heaven."

So in Timothy: "Let as many slaves as are under the yoke count their own masters as worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed; and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren: but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit."

And we have also a letter—the Epistle to Philemon—sending back a runaway slave to the slave-owner: "Receive him not now as a slave but above a slave: a brother beloved, specially unto me but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord."

But in all the Epistles there is no denunciation of the institution as such: no demand that when men become Christians they should cease owning slaves. Rather, as appears in the passage in the Epistle to Timothy, the opposite. While St. Paul apparently treats it as a crime that Christians should go to law with one another before non-Christian magistrates, he seems to take slavery entirely for granted.

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Is not this disturbing? What are we to make of this apparent indifference to such a prodigious form of evil?

We may, of course, remark in the first place that the Christians of St. Paul's time had no such responsibility for, and no such power of changing the legal institutions of their society as we have responsibility for, and power of changing ours. It is a momentous consequence of being citizens of a democratic state with full legislative powers that we are to some extent at least responsible for the institutions of our society. I say "to some extent" because it is as a matter of fact disputable just how far we could change those institutions by legislation so as to make them more ideal. It is quite certain that you cannot by legislation alone make Christian institutions: but it is also quite certain that we can make our institutions to some extent better: that we are in fact here and there constantly doing so. There is therefore imposed on us, as there was not imposed on the Christians of the first century, a moral responsibility for constant criticism of the institutions under which we live. We are bound to ask ourselves whether we could not make them, by social action as well as by our individual behaviour, better than they are. As Christians we are bound to be rising "at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons."

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But the different way in which we look at institutions and question their moral justification is not because we are more advanced than St. Paul or fundamentally differ from him. It is an ordinary instance of the different moral responsibilities which ensue from different social and historical situations. No one thinks, or at least no one ought to think, that he has the same moral responsibilities for the institutions of another country as he has for his own. There are certain obvious duties of democratic citizenship which did not arise in times when democratic citizenship did not exist.

That this is at any rate part of the explanation of the seeming indifference of the New Testament to the evils of social institutions is shown by the fact that there is more criticism of institutions in Greek moral theory than there is in the New Testament as there is more in the Prophets than in the New Testament. This is what we should expect from the altered social and political circumstances. The Greek teachers, whether they were democrats or not, had in mind a city-state that was made what it was by the conscious action of its inhabitants, a comparatively small number of people. Constitutions, says Plato, are but the reflection in the outside world of the values which prevail in men's minds. But that for him is a reason *not* for refusing to consider institutions, nor for

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concerning himself only with the individual's mind or heart. He took for granted that political action should further moral judgement. Any change of heart among individuals ought, he held, to have its consequence in changed institutions. So Aristotle, after expounding in the Ethics the nature of the good life, goes on in the Politics to consider the institutions which are to help to make that good life practicable.

The Greek thinkers of that age, with the city-state still a reality, hardly ever argue about this. They take it all quite naturally for granted. Aristotle's attitude towards slavery, for example, is not very enlightened. He proposes to reform not to abolish it. He defends it in principle and attacks it in detail. But he has something to say against slavery as an existing institution, whereas St. Paul apparently has nothing. Surely the explanation is that Aristotle thought of himself as arguing with, or at least as likely to influence those who were responsible for the institution as an institution, and St. Paul did not. For the coming of the Roman Empire meant that the government became something remote and unapproachable; something the moral reformer must take for granted and make the best of. And the effect of that change is seen in the very different outlook of the Stoics in regard to social reform as well as in the outlook of the New Testament. So St. Paul neither

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attacks nor defends slavery as an institution: he takes it for granted and he assumes that moral duties arise from its existence.

The second point I wish to make arises out of the first. Though we may be able to change much more of our institutional background than were the early Christians, we cannot change it all. There is a certain amount of it which has got to be taken for granted, some of it which is for our purpose and in our time inevitable: a framework within which we must work. To determine the boundaries between what can be changed and what cannot is not of course easy. Men will differ perpetually as to what is worth attempting and what is not. We may be called to play the most differing parts in matters of this kind. Some quite foolhardy attempts to change what is not ready to be changed, like John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, may have their part in making changes practical. It remains true, nevertheless, that it is our duty to distinguish between what can reasonably be attempted and what cannot: what there is a chance of reforming and what must in the meantime be accepted. Those distinctions, as I have said, will be differently made by different people. Some people will be concerned with preparing men's minds for social truths which will not take practical effect for generations; some with the beginnings of a movement which is still a long way

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from legislation; some with actual legislation. But these are different parts and they all imply that not all is changed at once; that in the meantime there is a background with which we have to come to terms, about which something has to be done by us as individuals who must deal with its results because they cannot yet deal with it.

There are some of us who need to learn this. We are so used nowadays to the notion that social institutions can be changed, that some people get to thinking that the only thing to do is to work at changing the whole system, lock, stock, and barrel. That often makes them act as though they had no duties at all except to a coming revolution; no real immediate personal relations to, or need of, an art of living with their fellows in the existing imperfect world—but only a relation, necessarily impersonal, with imagined future people in imagined future conditions. They are really like the early Christians with whom St. Paul deals in the Epistle to the Thessalonians. Some of the Christians at Thessalonica were so taken up with the imminence of the second coming that they abandoned all the ordinary duties of life. The early generations of Christians had like some modern Communists and Pacifists, an Apocalyptic outlook, however different their conception of the Apocalypse to be expected. But they had also to work out what

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German commentators call an *interimsethik*, morals for the meanwhile.

If this is so, if our Christian responsibility for the reform of society depends on our power to get society changed; if there are some aspects of society which we must take for granted and others which with courage and hopefulness and a common mind we can shape to something more like an expression of the mind of Christ, then it follows that it is part of our Christian duty to show wise discernment in these things: to give our whole mind and powers to alter what with such mind and powers can be altered. For the rest we shall have to be patient. But that does not mean that we have to be passive towards it.

Statesmanship is surely a Christian duty. "The Kingdom of God," said (if I remember rightly) St. Gregory Nazianzum, "is not necessarily confined to fools," and discernment—judging between this and that—is asked of us. When men say that all our social institutions are so rotten that there is no use doing anything about any of them, they are yielding to a most un-Christianlike despair.

But let us recognise that, for all the difference between our political position and that of St. Paul, nevertheless, in respect of some of our imperfect social institutions we are at any time in the same situation

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as were the people to whom he spoke. We have, that is, to recognise that we must in the immediate present face that there are “aspects of misery”

whose strong effects are such  
as he must bear, being powerless to redress;  
*and that unless above himself he can  
erect himself, how poor a thing is Man!*

At any moment, then, we have got to face the facts that in regard to certain social oppressions or evils a revolt by an individual might succeed as a *tour de force* for that individual, yet leave the mass of the oppressed as they were. Therefore the choice we are actually making may be between cutting loose ourselves and leaving others to an unrelieved fate, and choosing to suffer with our fellows. If we choose the latter, we have to reckon out with individual responsibility what is the right way of living for us with the custom or condition meanwhile unchanged.

Let us, then, see what St. Paul proposes to do about slavery. For though he does not openly attack the institution as such, he has proposals about it. He proposes two things: (1) that Christians should rise entirely above the assumptions of slavery in their own behaviour, (2) that they should form for themselves a society in which those assumptions of slavery are denied—so that within that circle the revolution has

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already naturally occurred and life is being lived in the new spirit.

Now the essence of slavery is that it is based on force, on the denial of the rights and personality of slave; that the slave obeys because he must, and the master treats his slaves as living instruments and gets as much out of them as he can. But St. Paul says that both slaves and masters are to ignore these assumptions. The slaves are to serve their masters as if they were serving Christ, who redeemed them. "Be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh—as unto Christ." What an astonishing thing to say!

Masters are to give up threatening, to abandon the attitude of force, to remember that there is no respect of persons with God—that over against God they and their slaves are on the same level. They are to give their slaves what is equal and just; that is, they are to treat them as persons who have rights: Philemon is to receive back Onesimus "not now as a slave but above a slave—a brother beloved both in the flesh and in the Lord." To act like that is to undermine the whole institution of slavery, but to do so by accepting it as an institution and giving the lie to the assumptions and views of human relations on which it is based.

The implication for us is that the best way to reform institutions is to accept their obligations and at the

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same time to act better than these demand or imply, in the hope that that better acting may become general enough to make it possible to bring the institution up to the new higher standard of how men think of each other and wish to act towards each other.

Many people act in just the opposite way, some deliberately but more unconsciously. There are those who combine public agitation for a new system with taking all the advantages the law gives them out of the old system. They demand that we should all be made to live a communal life, but meanwhile refuse to take a step towards such an ideal themselves. Such people seem to me either hypocrites or fools. But people who do not *act* like that sometimes say it is actually a good thing that employers should be tyrannous, that workers should be sweated, and so on; for the more nakedly evil capitalism or war are, the quicker they will be ended. Marx consoled himself in his prophecy of the increasing misery of the working class, which he thought inevitable, by the thought that this increasing misery and this alone would lead to the social revolution.

It is impossible in these pages to discuss all the points at issue between these two ideals, but this I must say: that the new ideals, the new conceptions of what our social life might be, the new standards in human relations, come, I believe, in the Christian way

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and not in the other. Only a passionate religious belief, held against all appearances, in the brotherhood of man, in all men being children of a common Father, could have made men able to condemn an institution so obvious and universal as slavery. Institutions go back to how men think about one another. Unless we can somehow change the way men think about one another, we cannot change the institution at all—whatever we may legally do. If we changed men's minds enough, we should not need any *revolutionary* change of the institution at all. But what ordinarily happens is that the silent gradual change of men's thoughts of one another goes far enough to make obvious to most people the discrepancy between the institution and men's better minds, and the legal reform of the institution becomes a practical possibility.

Goodness does not really work in men's minds unless they see it. Human ideals have got to be practised and acted on before men are really moved by them. "I, *if I be lifted up*, will draw all men unto me," and if we are in earnest about social reform, about changing the standard of "my station and its duties," we must display in our own lives the ideals which we wish to see embodied in that standard. This brings us to St. Paul's second proposal in regard to slavery. He wanted there to be, and did indeed see to it, that there should be a society in which the ideals of Jesus were

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real. In Christ there is neither slave nor free. Brotherhood in the Lord was not to be a mere aspiration or pious phrase. It was to be men's real relation to one another in the Church, and that relationship in the Church which Christians could create when they liked was to be more real and more important in their lives than the legal relation. The founder of the Independents in the seventeenth century wrote a pamphlet called *Reformation without Tarrying for Any*; and such reformation without tarrying for any we can at any time bring about. We can—at least to a large extent—bring it about that amongst some of us the legal and economic thing does not matter. We can at least see to it that there is set up before men's eyes a society which shows how men can live together as followers of Christ.

It is sadly true that the evils we deplore in institutions turn out to be too deeply ingrained in us for the new society to escape their infection; and the church may become a social institution as degraded as any other. It is oftener true that no one thinks the voluntary society anything like as real and important in life as the legal institution. We do not make it so because we do not believe that it is our brotherhood in Christ which is of primary importance in life. When that kind of decay really conquers a church, when churches become really like Samuel Butler's

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musical banks, they had better be put an end to. They are worth nothing if they do not show that men really think their citizenship is in heaven.

But, nevertheless, this way of turning the flank of recalcitrant institutions is always open to us. We can form societies in which we make Christian relations real; we can learn the art of living together as if we were all persons and brothers. If we do that, then our social reforms and our politics will be based on realities: if we do not, they will not be much more than shams. "There is a true Church," says Ruskin, "wherein one man's hand meets another's helpfully, and that is the only holy or mother Church which ever was or ever shall be."

To sum all this up, we have as Christians a fourfold duty to institutions:

(a) As responsible members of a democratic State we are bound to do all in our power to see that our institutions act with all the justice of which they are capable: that our State—a State in the world of States—acts justly: that our laws are justly enacted and administered impartially. That is a duty of witness: claiming that men who are responsible to us should live up to the professed level of their institutions: that the institution should be as good as it pretends to be.

(b) We have a duty to do what we can to make

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our institutions better; for example, to change a world of merely rival nations into a world of nations who normally act through the League of Nations, or something like it; or to pass a better Factory Act than those which already exist, and so on. This, as we said, includes the duty of discerning what is practical and what is not.

(c) But when these obviously political duties are done, we are asked by the Gospel to be the salt of the earth, to act better than institutions demand of us, to deny in our actions the faulty assumptions of the institutions under which we live and which in the meantime we must take for granted. Laws and institutions, applying as they do to everybody, must depend on how most people are prepared to behave. If people behave worse, the standard of the institution will go down; if they behave better, it can be raised. It is for us on our part to raise the standard, not to take the last penny the law allows us and give as little as it demands.

(d) So much for our individual duty. But we can also, in the midst of this world, so much of which we have to take for granted, be members of a society which shows forth socially—in the relations of its members with one another—what society as a whole ought to be. We can then give corporate expression to our ideals. Such a society the Church is called to

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be; we can also form at once much smaller societies—actual patterns of the social behaviour we preach.

Bishop Gore wrote about forty-five years ago a pamphlet on *The Social Doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount*, with a few paragraphs of which I will close this chapter.

“Christian effort for social improvement must always have its stronghold in the regeneration and sanctification of individual characters. True, there are social works which can be carried out without regard to this. When Lazarus was to be raised from the dead, it was the life-giving word of Christ alone which could impart life; but before it could find access to the tomb the stone had to be taken away. Which things are an allegory. Christ alone, in direct quickening grace, can restore the moral health of individuals, but there are preliminary obstacles to its influence to be removed. Bad dwellings, inadequate wages, inadequate education, inability to use leisure—these are stones which lie upon the graves of men spiritually dead. We must take away the stones. Only we shall not exaggerate what merely external reform is likely to accomplish. The real obstacle to social advance is selfishness or sin. No external reform will remove this. Nothing but the conversion of souls from self to God. Real social reform, then, will proceed, not by the method of majorities, but from small groups of sanctified men,

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like the apostles; and that is, in very truth, 'the secret of Jesus.'

"Our Lord here is speaking to the Church, not to the State; He is founding a society which is to subsist on moral sanctions, not material. If it is a socialism that is being established, it is a socialism of free choice, not State compulsion. It is true that this Christian society or brotherhood must needs have had an immense influence on State life: it must needs have become the very soul of the States among which it spread—as in fact the early Christians boasted that they were the soul of the empire. It must needs have become this, if for no other reason, then because the greater the number of individuals who have trampled on selfishness and who seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the easier becomes the process of legislation. So that, if all citizens were real Christians, legislation would be in abeyance, for heaven would become

Where love is an unerring light  
And joy its own security.

"But great as must needs have been the influence of Christianity upon the State and the obligation of Christians to the State, it is none the less true that Christ is legislating for a distinct society; not for humanity as it is, but for the humanity of redemption,

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'the brotherhood,' the Church. The reason of this method is sufficiently plain. The fact is that, because humanity is spoiled by sin, it must be given a fresh start from a new centre, even Jesus Christ, who is the second Adam. The Church, where men are in very truth sons and brothers, is to be a sphere hedged in and kept distinct; a sphere wherein is realized what human life is meant to be, and, rightly dealt with, is capable of becoming. This is meant to have a double result. On the one hand, that Christians may learn from 'love of the brethren,' i.e. love in the narrower and select society, the wider love of man—as St. Peter expresses it (2 Peter i. 7), 'In your love of the brethren supply love'; on the other hand, that the world may find in the Church 'a city set on an hill,' a 'light' to show it what human life may really be, a 'salt' to keep it from corruption. That the Church is not the State and the State not the Church, is a truth we cannot realise too clearly. The Church, in fact, can only do its duty to the State, as salt or light, when its distinctiveness is kept in clear recognition. False methods of diffusion—attempts, like our Anglican attempt, to merge the Church in the State—have done incalculable harm. We must recall ourselves to the scriptural principle—which I may add is quite consistent with an ecclesiastical establishment, though some particular forms of establishment have somewhat imperilled it

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—we must emphasize the fundamental distinctiveness of the Church as a general truth.

“And we are to apply this principle in single parishes and districts of human life by endeavouring to concentrate Church feeling, and to accentuate its moral meaning and requirements; we are really to ‘correct its tendency to diffusiveness,’ if diffusiveness is to be purchased at the cost of intensity. ‘Ye are the salt of the earth’—a salt which purifies by distinctiveness, which influences by dissimilarity, which keeps in health by emphatic savour. I would strive that the Church in every parish should represent, not such and such a number of adherents, but the morally best, be they many or be they few, in every class; or, to put it more truly, those who are honestly striving after moral excellence, and ready to make sacrifices in its interests. The Church is not to represent public opinion, but to be the home of the best moral conscience of the community.”

C H A P T E R   V

*The Conclusion of the Matter*

CAN we now summarise this discussion about the two moralities of my station and its duties and of the challenge to perfection and ask if there is a real conflict between them?

We have seen that we cannot, if we would, escape the claims of the morality of my station and its duties. We are all of us members of society, of a particular concrete historical society. That society in order to be a society has to have and maintain rules of behaviour, to have a certain organisation, to uphold certain institutions, to keep itself going. These rules and institutions are not perfect. If they are the expression to some extent of the honesty and public spirit and courage of those who have built them up and of those who maintain them, they are to some extent the expression of their selfishness and callousness, timidity and stupidity. We may very well think that the rules and institutions might be improved: we may even commit ourselves to a campaign in order to improve them in this way or that. Nevertheless, there in the meantime they are with their virtues and their defects,

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and we have to take these rules more or less as we find them.

Our own society has been largely influenced by the teaching of the other morality. It recognises, though very imperfectly, that it must criticise its institutions in the light of the challenge to perfection. But the influence of the Christian challenge on our social institutions is fitful and imperfect. We are inclined sometimes to set over against our existing imperfect society the ideal of a Christian society, transformed through and through by the spirit of the Gospel. We flatter ourselves by assuming that that can soon be established, and we say that when it is established, there will be only rules which we can cheerfully and wholeheartedly obey—but not till then. Meanwhile, on this view we are at liberty to feel that to this imperfect society we owe, if any, only a grudging and imperfect allegiance and that we may escape its obligations when we can.

But if we rightly comprehend the challenge of the Gospel that we must be perfect with the perfection of God, we must see that this is only self-flattery. For even if we could, as we cannot or, at any rate, do not transform our existing society according to our present understanding of the demands of perfection, that very transformation would reveal to us new possibilities of conduct which we do not yet entirely apprehend,

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and we should then see that this longed-for ideal was itself imperfect.

The tension between society as it is and society as it might be will always remain. If ever this tension were to cease, it would be a sign not that society had become through and through Christian, but that it had ceased to be Christian at all, even though it had miraculously achieved a perfect embodiment of perfection as man understands perfection at this or that point of time. The tension, that is to say, is not a tension between unmitigated evil and absolute good. It is the outcome both of our discontent with an imperfect concrete situation, which we know can be better shaped than we have shaped it, and also of our discontent with our own vision of perfection.

We cannot escape the claims of the concrete though imperfect morality of my station and its duties, nor dare we be deaf to the challenge to pursue perfection

Through widening chambers of surprise to where  
Throbs rapture near an end that aye recedes.

We are citizens of a definite historical society, but it is also true, as St. Paul told the Philippians, that our citizenship is in heaven. We have duties as citizens of that kingdom as well as duties as citizens of our earthly country, and we have to unravel the relation between those two claims.

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For most of us most of the time the claims of the two moralities are not conflicting but complementary. Consider two passages in the New Testament: "And one of them a lawyer asked him a question, tempting him, 'Master, which is the great commandment in the law?' And he said unto him, 'Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'" It is interesting that the parallel though slightly different version of this saying in St. Luke is followed by the Parable of the Good Samaritan—*the* parable of the morality of grace which sweeps away the narrowness of the morality of my station and its duties. The implication is that the complete and proper fulfilment of the law is to listen to and obey also the demands of grace.

St. Paul, in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, gives what might well be a commentary on this saying of Jesus. After telling the Christians of Rome that they are to obey rulers: "Wherefore ye must needs be in subjugation, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

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Render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." He then goes on: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' "

Let us consider what this means and see what can be said against it. To say that love is the fulfilling of the law does not mean that to carry out the duties prescribed in the law is to love. It means that if we are really to carry out fully the further and fuller purpose for which law exists, we must not content ourselves with carrying out the obligations of law or the duties of our station, but carry them out in love, adding all that love demands or suggests. We are to do what the law demands and to do more. We made the same point in an earlier chapter when we said that if we love our neighbours, we must desire that they, as we, should be delivered from the violence and evil of anarchy: we must therefore desire that there should be rules. It is the demand, then, of the morality of

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perfection that there should be law, and that the law should be maintained. The morality of perfection cannot demand of those who accept its challenge that we should maintain a perfect law—for a perfect law *cannot be maintained or even conceived*. As we saw, law to be law must be kept: it can only be kept if most people are mostly willing to keep it: it cannot therefore rise much above the average moral code of society: it must therefore be imperfect. When therefore the morality of perfection demands that we should desire that there should be rules, and be ready to maintain these, it demands that we should desire and maintain something which from its nature must be imperfect. We do not desire its imperfections. Contrariwise we are bound to do our best to cure them. But we cannot get law or rules without imperfections and if we are to help others and maintain social life, laws and rules we must have.

At the same time rules, laws, and codes are not the expression of what is thought by most people to be perfect conduct. It is not the aim of law to enforce even the ordinary person's conception of perfect conduct. Its purpose is to maintain rights: to protect people against arbitrary interferences, to provide an assured moral background or environment within which men and women may be free. It "hinders hindrances" to the good life and provides a framework

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for free action. It prescribes a necessary minimum, not a maximum of conduct. Now this, as we saw in considering a game, is the part played by rules. To content ourself, therefore, with keeping and maintaining rules and to suppose that that is all that morality demands is to mistake the means for the end. Rules enable one to play a game, but mere keeping of rules is not playing a game. If the rules are to serve their purpose, their purpose must be served also by the spontaneity and creativeness and freedom shown within the rules. Of course, therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. The law provides a framework which love fills up; is the dry bones into which love breathes life.

Our actions in society have always two sides. We are, by acting in a certain way, helping to make up the assured background of other people's actions, and we are also making our own positive contribution. As regards the first side, we have duties to others and others have claims or rights against us that we should act in a certain way. These are the duties of our station. Others rely on us to do certain things as we rely on them in turn.

But there are almost always many ways in which these obligations can be fulfilled. My station sets the conditions upon which my positive contribution can be offered. So long as I observe the conditions, do

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what is necessary to give others the necessary background for their freedom, I have done the duty of my station, but I have not answered the call of perfection. I, as a member of a particular human society, may just do what is required of me, but if I claim my dual membership I must do a great deal more and do it ungrudgingly and with grace.

The morality of grace may show itself as was suggested in the third chapter in

That best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love.

There is no conflict here between the two moralities, though there is a contrast. The morality of my station and its duties is relatively fixed, stable, and determinable. It is not left to our own initiative. Others have claims upon us and those claims are, in theory at least, determinable by a third person, who could say to us, "You ought to have done this or not done that." Compared with these definite duties the demands of grace are spontaneous, fluid, indeterminable. Because they need creativeness and spontaneity they will be conceived differently and executed differently by different people. We can say, "A man ought to be gracious," if we mean by that that he ought to do more than his bare duty. One might easily say to

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someone, "Yes, of course you did all he had a right to, but you might have been nicer or a little more forthcoming about it." When someone comes to consult us as to what he ought to do, we normally are able to say, "Well, clearly you must at least do this or that"; or, "You have no right to ignore this or that clear duty." To go beyond that may be to suggest some things which it would be generous to do, but we do not ordinarily feel that it is for us to say a man ought to do such things. What he does in such "acts of supererogation" we feel to be his business.

"Are there, then, no rules for the exercise of the morality of grace?" The answer is, "No more and no less than there are rules for writing poems or painting pictures." We need to use our imagination; we need to train ourselves to be sensitive and observant. We may need to adopt rules of life which will keep us sensitive and imaginative. For we can see that there are times or moods in which we are dull and unobservant and unsympathetic, as there are others where we are morally alive and creative. But that only means that while there may be rules the keeping of which will help the spontaneity of our actions, of the spontaneity itself there can in the nature of the case be no rules.

Thus far there is no beginning of a conflict between

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the two moralities. But when we go beyond the doing the duties of our station with grace, to meeting claims of the morality of perfection which clash with the human claims of our stations and its duties, conflict does arise. If we keep our ears open to the cry of need from wherever it comes, we may feel called to leave the immediate duties of our station, to give up what seems our proper business and attend to this new call. That we must be prepared to do that at times is clear. George Meredith's *Fair Ladies in Revolt* from the homes where they were adjured to shelter, heard the cries of unsheltered women which would not let them "stay put" in safety. Conflict there may certainly be. "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." But let us beware of confusing what is a true response to this overruling claim of perfection or of the universal with the mere see-saw morality which alternates concentration on the near and concentration on the remote with no attempt to resolve the conflict between the two claims. Dickens's Mrs. Jellyby was not a noble woman but the reverse. She neglected her husband and family for the natives of Borrioboola-gha without any conflict, compunction, or awareness of the tragedy of her own home.

This conflict of claims is real and urgent for most

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of us at the present day. For with the increase of communication and information all over the world, we are made aware every day of claims upon us—claims of piteous need. What are we to do about it? Are we to go on with the immediate work we have to do and shut our ears to those cries of need? Or are we to neglect our work and the claims of those who are bound to us by natural ties for distant claims of greater need?

Is there any rule to observe in such conflicts, and can love here be the fulfilling of the law? No rule certainly to decide in this case or that. A rule there may be that we do not confine our concern and care only to the duties of our station, that we make it our business to have a wider concern for things beyond our immediate duties. The phrase, "Charity begins at home" is abused by people who mean that at any rate it shall end there. But if it is real *charity* which begins at home, it cannot possibly end there. If we put grace into the fulfilling of the duties of our station, we are putting into that something which in its nature is bound to overflow, and we shall be most ready to listen wisely to calls from without if we put both mind and heart into the duties immediately in front of us.

We need here, as always, humility and faith. Our duty is to go about our business, doing the work which is to our hand, but ready to listen to any call

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that comes to us. For the testimony of those who do the most heroic, adventurous, and fruitful things is that those demands which force them to disregard for the time their more obvious ordinary duties come to them as a call or a "concern." Such persons do not ordinarily worry about the conflict between two standards.

Some points of time there are—

Oh it is idle, then,  
to whisper: "*Meanwhile*, thus—"

We only must beware,  
must turn from what has been  
which had determined us;

since, at just such a time  
God faces us alone,  
Lord of what was and is.

The heavens unfold, sublime,  
divinity we own,  
earth's mandate vanishes.

God can the earth remake,  
and we be born again;  
behold, all things are new.

Such points of time we wake,  
we see one purpose plain,  
God's will we will, and do.

So far there has not been much difficulty in seeing the truth of St. Paul's words that "love is the fulfilling of the law." The law by itself is rigid, inadequate,

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narrow—a framework to be filled up. But suppose the framework is wrong even as a framework; supposing it positively gets in the way of loving our neighbour. “If there be any other commandment,” says St. Paul, “it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Does that apply to Leviticus xxiv. 20: “Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again”?

When that law was made, it was probably a grim law for a grimmer people. But law and custom and standards work in two ways. Their proper purpose is to secure the better elements in society against the attack of the worse, to help us

to keep  
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.

But they may also secure customs and standards against the criticism of the better. The sanctity of law and custom may easily be sanctity given to abuses. Take the C.D. Acts, or the present Government’s refusal to deal with football pools.

But in any given society at any time there are customs, institutions, ways of behaving, which most people accept, take for granted, and even defend, though a succeeding generation will cry out against

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them with indignant self-righteousness. It will probably thank God that it is not as other generations were, even those Victorians. It cannot realise that its successors will be just as contemptuous of it for being blind to various iniquities which it now tolerates.

The effective agents of this progress in our standards are the more morally sensitive amongst us, the prophets or saints or poets of their generation. Such men and women show us new moral values, new possibilities of social behaviour; or they show us evils in our most respectable institutions to which we have been indifferent or blind. They themselves may become so intensely conscious of the evils of the custom or institution that they feel they can have nothing whatever to do with it. That can sometimes be done without much conflict. There is in most society, and particularly in a democratic society, some elasticity and give and take. We may often go on enjoying the elementary advantages of society while refusing to conform to some of its standards or rules. But there are also institutions so intertwined with the whole structure of society that we cannot help being involved in them so long as we remain members of society. Slavery in the ancient world was certainly an institution of that kind. Caste is an institution of the same kind in Hindu society. War in war-time is another. If the prophet is convinced that his business

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is to make his contemporaries realise the evil to which they are blind, he is almost bound to come in conflict with the morality of my station and its duties. It is unreasonable, I think, to ask him to act "reasonably." We may point out to him that if every one renounced society or its fundamental institutions because of an intense dislike to any one of the numerous evils involved in it, society would become impossible and anarchy which is infinitely worse would take its place. The protester's answer is: "I am not concerned with all the various imperfections of society. I am concerned to witness against this particular and monstrous evil. It is not my business what other people do or do not do. I have got to have no part or lot in this thing." We may point out that he cannot help indirectly at least being involved in an institution so fundamental. If he is wise he will admit that, but say he must protest and witness somehow, and this particular method of non-co-operation or protest which he has chosen seems to him most effective.

Witness must, I think, work in this exceptional way. The new illumination comes to individuals, not to society as a whole. It comes to certain individuals just because they are more sensitive morally than other people. They, on the other hand, cannot demand that others should agree with them just because they are vehement and insistent, and in the meantime those

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other people must act up to their lights. Hence we can easily get a conflict between good people, quite honest and sincere on both sides. The prophet may see nothing but the evil against which he wants to witness. Those responsible for carrying on society cannot see how society could be saved from ruin if they listened to the prophet or allowed him to persuade others to his non-co-operation.

Dr. Johnson once in reply to a question of Boswell's about the persecution of the early Christians, replied: "The State had a right to martyr the early Christians and they had a right to be martyred." The remark has characteristic Johnsonian toughness, but it is sound in principle. Men are bound to act up to the light that is in them, and as progress in moral insight comes unevenly—as the wind bloweth where it listeth—there must be difference of opinion as to what we or our society ought to do. Often it is impossible to allow people to go each their own way. Much action is co-operative and must be so.

If we believe that illumination and progress come in this irregular unpredictable way, we shall be wise if we arrange our society to leave as much room as we possibly can for difference of opinion and social dissidence. But we are equally bound to see that there are rules: that the rules are the best which the accepted ends of society demand and to see that those rules

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are kept. There is abundant material for tension and even for tragedy there, but I do not see that it can be avoided. There is no growth without tension, and tension is bound sometimes to mean tragedy.

The tension arises not merely because exceptional moral insight is the gift of a few. It comes partly from the different natural bias of the prophet and the administrator. There is a remarkable play by Björnson Björnson called *Beyond Human Strength*. The hero and heroine are a Norwegian pastor and his wife. The pastor is a saint and a wonderful faith-healer. His tragedy is that his wife is bedridden and all his faith cannot heal her. In the first act of the play the pastor's wife gives the explanation of her husband's failure to cure her. She describes his enthusiasm and goodness, but says that someone has got to keep the house going and look after the children and pay the bills and, if she had the enthusiastic and simple faith of her husband, everything would go to pieces. She has got to keep rational and common sense for his sake as well as for everybody else's and, if that means she has to stay bedridden, she does not complain.

There is much truth in the wife's contention. The mind and qualities of the administrator or the judge are very different from those of the prophet, and both are needed. New ideas and new revelations are disturbing and often extremely troublesome. Their

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acceptance may mean scrapping valuable and trusted institutions and the men responsible for running the institutions are bound to view new revelations with caution, and unlikely to view them without distrust. The tension between the administrator and the prophet is as old as the Christian Church, and there is no reason to suppose that the tension is always the fault of the administrator rather than of the prophet, or vice versa. The view which is sometimes heard nowadays that no Christian can be a Conservative is as foolish as the view which used to be more popular, that no Christian can be a Radical. It takes all sorts to make the Kingdom of God, as much as it takes all sorts to make a world. It was like the wisdom of St. Paul to put his great hymn to love immediately after what he had to say on diversities of gifts.

We shall find it hard to believe that love is the fulfilling of the law, when we hear the protest of the prophet against the morality of my station and its duties, but that is because we *will* take a namby-pamby view of love. It is the hardest thing in the world to accept the lesson of the Cross.

We are sometimes told that because it is essentially the function of the Church to hold up the standard of perfection to society, witness and protest against the defects of the morality of my station and its duties is the prophetic function of the Church, with the

implication that it is not a function for individuals. This seems to me to be a profound mistake. It is the function of the Church, as we saw in the last chapter, to form a community which is a fellowship, where men can live together in relations governed by a higher standard than prevails in society at large: to show by the example of her corporate life that the fact that men are all children of one Father is a more effective fact than all their differences of ability and wealth and station. The actual life lived in the Church ought in itself to be a living, effective, and constructive witness against the evils and failures of society. It is also the function of the Church to produce prophets, and the evidence of its vitality will be the fact that it is a school of the prophets: that the men and women who show us what society might do, who correct our blindness and indifference to the evils, are inspired by the Church's fellowship. The Church ought to go a long way to encourage liberty of prophesying, to be prepared to face all the scandal to which liberty of prophesying is bound to give rise. But prophecy itself is an individual responsibility. Prophets speak in the name of God who gives them their individual message. They may expect and hope that the Church will hear them and support them. But however much they draw, and ought to draw, their inspiration from the Church, they and not the collective Church must give

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the message. To hope or ask for anything else is to confound the institutional and prophetic functions of the Church.

To hope that though there may be tension between the Church and the State there will be no tension within the Church is a vain and a mistaken hope. For, if there is anything in all the discussion of this book, it must have shown that the conflict between the two moralities is a sign of vitality and health. I said earlier that if it disappeared in society, society would cease to be Christian. It is equally true that a church in which no such tension and conflict existed would cease to be a church.

Above all, we must bear in mind that characteristic of Christian action of which St. Paul's treatment of slavery is one illustration. The challenging and revolutionary work of a real Christianity appears first as a living, actual transformation of life. It shows as new life breaking through the old growths which have served their purpose and are ready to decay. Its beginning brings the gift, not of a devastating clearance, a vacant institutionalism, but of a fresh green leaf significant of a new birth, a renewal of the spirit of life and love.

I shall conclude by quoting a notable passage from one of von Hügel's letters, where he talks of "unity ever reconquered by chastisement, a unity always to

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be regained through the obscurity and effort of action, and the beautiful profound asceticism of creatively thinking and being, which plants the Cross everywhere, and which through willed and loved friction wins fruit ever and everywhere,” and goes on to say, “Religion cannot become its own fullest self without, not merely occasioning the love of the Cross in other departments, but also taking the Cross upon *itself*. And then all things will become food for such a faith, and it will become the base and transfigurer of all things.”



